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Environment and sustainable development: International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

Report of the Second Committee*

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I. Introduction

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 100 (see A/54/588, para. 2). Action on sub-item (b) was taken at the 39th and 43rd meetings, on 12 and 24 November 1999. An account of the Committee's consideration of the item is contained in the relevant summary records (A/C.2/54/SR.39 and 43).

II. Consideration of proposals

A. Draft resolutions A/C.2/54/L.28 and A/C.2/54/L.44

2. At the 39th meeting, on 12 November, the representative of Guyana, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, and Mexico, introduced a draft resolution entitled "International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction: successor arrangements" (A/C.2/54/L.28) which read:

> "*The General Assembly*,
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> "*Recalling* General Assembly resolutions 44/236 of 22 December 1989, 49/22 A of 2 December 1994, 49/22 B of 20 December 1994 and 53/185 of 15 December 1998, and reiterating Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/63 of 30 July 1999 on

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the successor arrangements for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction,

"*Recalling also* the results of the programme forum on the International Decade, held at Geneva from 5 to 9 July 1999, and the Geneva mandate on disaster reduction adopted by the forum, together with the strategy document entitled 'A safer world in the twenty-first century: risk and disaster reduction',

"*Recalling further* the forward-looking platform for international concerted disaster reduction as developed by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction and as expressed in the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action,

"*Reiterating* that natural disasters damage the social and economic infrastructure of all countries, although the long-term consequences of natural disasters are especially severe for developing countries and hamper their sustainable development,

"*Recognizing* the need for the international community to demonstrate the firm political determination required to utilize scientific and technical knowledge to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters and environmental hazards, taking into account the particular needs of developing countries,

"*Having considered* the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/63,

"*Noting* the Declaration on Technical Cooperation for the Prevention and Relief of Natural Disasters, adopted by the Rio Group at its summit meeting in Mexico in May 1999, as well as the results of the 1999 Rio de Janeiro summit,

"*Taking into account* the consideration of natural disasters contained in the report of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, held in Vienna, from 19 to 30 July 1999,

"1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the reports of the Secretary-General concerning the activities of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and on the recommendations on institutional arrangements for disaster reduction activities of the United Nations system after the conclusion of the Decade;

"2. *Expresses deep concern* at the increasing number and scale of natural disasters, resulting in massive losses of life and long-term negative social, economic and environmental consequences on vulnerable societies worldwide, in particular in developing countries;

"3. *Endorses* the proposals put forward in the report of the Secretary-General to ensure the swift establishment of future arrangements for disaster reduction as well as functional continuity for the effective implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction;

"4. *Also endorses* the Secretary-General's proposal to establish an inter-agency task force and inter-agency secretariat for disaster reduction, in a flexible manner, for an initial period during the biennium 2000-2001, and to undertake a review of these temporary arrangements after the first year of operations with a view to submitting proposals on adjustments regarding their definite shape;

"5. *Decides* to maintain the observance of the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction on the second Wednesday of October;

"6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to establish a trust fund, from voluntary contributions, for disaster reduction to enable the funding of the inter-agency

secretariat for disaster reduction, and to transfer all assets of the Trust Fund for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction to the new trust fund for disaster reduction, with effect on 1 January 2000;

"7. *Calls on* Governments, in cooperation with the United Nations system, and non-governmental organizations to assist the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to implement a comprehensive strategy to maximize international cooperation in the field of natural disasters, based upon an effective division of labour, from prevention to early warning, response, mitigation, rehabilitation and reconstruction, including through the development and strengthening of regional approaches that take into account regional, subregional, national and local circumstances and needs;

"8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to solicit the required inputs from Governments, the relevant organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations in order to further optimize and disseminate listings of organizations of civil protection at all levels, with updated inventories of available resources, to provide assistance in the event of natural disasters;

"9. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to further optimize and disseminate all the necessary information, including handbooks, that guide the international community at large in the effective management of international cooperation in the fields of disaster prevention, early warning, response, mitigation, rehabilitation and reconstruction;

"10. *Emphasizes* the urgent need to further develop and use the existing scientific and technical knowledge to reduce the vulnerability to natural disasters, bearing in mind the particular needs of developing countries, and, in this regard, calls on all countries to strengthen scientific research and training of experts in universities and specialized institutions and to promote the exchange of information;

"11. *Recognizes* the importance of early warning as an essential element in the culture of prevention, and encourages renewed efforts at all levels to contribute to natural hazard monitoring and impact prediction, development and transfer of technology, capacity-building for the detection of natural hazards, issuance and communication of early warnings, as well as education and professional training, public information and awareness-raising, to ensure adequate action warnings;

"12. *Reaffirms* the need for strengthening an international framework for the improvement of early warning systems by developing an effective international mechanism on early warning, including the transfer of technology related to early warning to developing countries, under the auspices of the United Nations, as an integral part of future strategies and framework or any arrangements for natural disaster reduction;

"13. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report through the Economic and Social Council to the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, under the agenda item entitled 'Environment and sustainable development'."

3. At its 43rd meeting, on 24 November, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Daúl Matute (Peru), introduced a draft resolution entitled "International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction: successor arrangements" (A/C.2/54/L.44), which he submitted on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.28. In introducing the draft resolution, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee orally revised it by moving the words "to ensure adequate action warnings" in operative paragraph 11 to the end of the paragraph.

4. At the same meeting the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.44, as orally revised (see para. 10, draft resolution I).

5. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.44, draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.28 was withdrawn by its sponsors.

B. Draft resolutions A/C.2/54/L.29 and A/C.2/54/L.43

6. At the 39th meeting, on 12 November, the representative of Guyana, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, and Mexico, introduced a draft resolution entitled "International cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon" (A/C.2/54/L.29) which read:

"*The General Assembly*,

"*Recalling* its resolutions 52/200 of 18 December 1997 and 53/185 of 15 December 1998, and reiterating Economic and Social Council resolutions 1999/46 of 28 July 1999 and 1999/63 and 30 July 1999 on the successor arrangements for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction,

"*Recalling also* paragraph 20 of the report of the Secretary-General on successor arrangements for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction,

"*Having considered* the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon and the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its seventh session,

"*Having also considered* the report on the conclusions and recommendations of the first Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts on El Niño, held at Guayaquil, Ecuador, from 9 to 13 November 1998, and the feasibility study for the establishment of an international research centre on the El Niño/Southern Oscillation,

"1. *Takes note with satisfaction* of the report of the Secretary-General and endorses the conclusions and recommendations contained therein;

"2. *Welcomes* the 1999 retrospective report on the El Niño/Southern Oscillation prepared by the World Meteorological Organization;

"3. *Reiterates* the invitation made by the General Assembly to Member States in paragraphs 8 and 9 of its resolution 52/200, in relation to the technical and financial assistance needed to strengthen the national capacity of developing countries to support observation and research systems at the global and regional levels to prevent, mitigate and repair the damage caused by the El Niño/Southern Oscillation;

"4. *Welcomes* the recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session regarding the approach the United Nations system and the international community should take in dealing with the El Niño/Southern Oscillation, and reiterates the invitation to Member States to cover in their annual national reports the impact of the El Niño/Southern Oscillation;

"5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take all necessary measures for the establishment of the international research centre on El Niño at Guayaquil, Ecuador, and calls upon the international community to provide financial, technical and scientific assistance and cooperation for this purpose;

"6. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue the full implementation of General Assembly resolutions 52/200 and 53/185, as an integral part of the agreed

arrangements after the conclusion of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction;

"7. *Further requests* the Secretary-General to submit, through the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eighth session and the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2000, a report on the implementation of the present resolution, under the item entitled 'Environment and sustainable development'."

7. At the 43rd meeting, on 24 November, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Daúl Matute (Peru), introduced a draft resolution entitled "International cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon" (A/C.2/54/L.43), which he submitted on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.29.

8. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.43 (see para. 10, draft resolution II).

9. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.43, draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.29 was withdrawn by its sponsors.

III. Recommendations of the Second Committee

10. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Draft resolution I
International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction: successor arrangements

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 44/236 of 22 December 1989, 49/22 A of 2 December 1994, 49/22 B of 20 December 1994 and 53/185 of 15 December 1998, and reiterating Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/63 of 30 July 1999 on the successor arrangements for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction,

Recalling also the results of the programme forum on the International Decade, held at Geneva from 5 to 9 July 1999, and the Geneva mandate on disaster reduction adopted by the forum, together with the strategy document entitled "A safer world in the twenty-first century: risk and disaster reduction",

Recalling further the forward-looking platform for international concerted disaster reduction as developed by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction and as expressed in the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action,[1]

Reiterating that natural disasters damage the social and economic infrastructure of all countries, although the long-term consequences of natural disasters are especially severe for developing countries and hamper their sustainable development,

[1] A/CONF.172/9, resolution 1, annex I.

Recognizing the need for the international community to demonstrate the firm political determination required to utilize scientific and technical knowledge to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters and environmental hazards, taking into account the particular needs of developing countries,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/63,[2]

Noting the Declaration on Technical Cooperation for the Prevention and Relief of Natural Disasters, adopted by the Rio Group at its summit meeting in Mexico in May 1999, as well as the results of the first summit meeting of Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union, held at Rio de Janeiro on 28 and 29 June 1999,[3]

Taking into account the consideration of natural disasters contained in the report of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, held at Vienna from 19 to 30 July 1999,[4]

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the reports of the Secretary-General concerning the activities of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction[5] and on the recommendations on institutional arrangements for disaster reduction activities of the United Nations system after the conclusion of the Decade;[6]

2. *Expresses deep concern* at the increasing number and scale of natural disasters, which have resulted in massive losses of life and long-term negative social, economic and environmental consequences for vulnerable societies worldwide, in particular in developing countries;

3. *Endorses* the proposals put forward in the report of the Secretary-General[6] to ensure the swift establishment of future arrangements for disaster reduction as well as functional continuity for the effective implementation of the international strategy for disaster reduction;

4. *Also endorses* the proposal of the Secretary-General to establish an inter-agency task force and inter-agency secretariat for disaster reduction, under the direct authority of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, in a flexible manner, for the initial period of the biennium 2000-2001, and to undertake a review of these arrangements after the first year of operations with a view to submitting proposals on adjustments;[7]

5. *Decides* to maintain the observance of the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction on the second Wednesday of October;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to establish, from voluntary contributions, a trust fund for disaster reduction to enable the funding of the inter-agency secretariat for disaster reduction, and to transfer all assets of the Trust Fund for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction to the new trust fund for disaster reduction, effective 1 January 2000;

7. *Calls upon* Governments to continue to cooperate and coordinate their efforts with the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other partners, as appropriate,

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[2] A/54/497.

[3] A/54/448.

[4] A/CONF.184/6.

[5] A/54/132-E/1999/80 and Add.1.

[6] See A/54/136-E/1999/89.

[7] See A/54/497, paras. 11-14.

to implement and further develop a comprehensive strategy to maximize international cooperation in the field of natural disasters, based upon an effective division of labour, from prevention to early warning, response, mitigation, rehabilitation and reconstruction, including through capacity-building at all levels, and the development and strengthening of global and regional approaches that take into account regional, subregional, national and local circumstances and needs, as well as the need to strengthen coordination of national emergency response agencies in natural disasters;

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to solicit the required inputs from Governments, the relevant organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations in order to further optimize and disseminate listings of organizations of the United Nations system as well as non-governmental organizations that provide civil protection and emergency response at all levels, with updated inventories of available resources, to help during natural disasters;

9. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to further optimize and disseminate through all available channels, including handbooks, the information necessary to guide the international community at large in the effective management of international cooperation in the fields of disaster prevention, early warning, response, mitigation, rehabilitation and reconstruction;

10. *Emphasizes* the urgent need to further develop and make use of the existing scientific and technical knowledge to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters, bearing in mind the particular needs of developing countries, and, in this regard, calls upon all countries to strengthen scientific research and training of experts in universities and specialized institutions and to promote the exchange of information;

11. *Recognizes* the importance of early warning as an essential element in the culture of prevention, and encourages renewed efforts at all levels to contribute to natural hazard monitoring and impact prediction, the development and transfer of technology, capacity-building for disaster preparedness, the detection of natural hazards and the issuance and communication of early warnings, as well as education and professional training, public information and awareness-raising activities, such as the Conference on Early-Warning Systems for the Reduction of Natural Disasters, held at Potsdam, Germany, in 1998, to ensure adequate action warnings;

12. *Reaffirms* the need for strengthening an international framework for the improvement of early warning systems and disaster preparedness by developing an effective international mechanism for early warning, including the transfer of technology related to early warning to developing countries, under the auspices of the United Nations, as an integral part of future strategies and frameworks or any arrangements for natural disaster reduction;

13. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the implementation of the international strategy for disaster reduction, under the agenda item entitled "Environment and sustainable development".

Draft resolution II
International cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 52/200 of 18 December 1997 and 53/185 of 15 December 1998 on international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon, and reiterating Economic and Social Council resolutions 1999/46 of 28 July 1999, on the same subject, and 1999/63 of 30 July 1999 on the successor arrangements for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction,

Recalling also paragraph 20 of the report of the Secretary-General on successor arrangements for the Decade,[8]

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon[9] and the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its seventh session,[10]

Having also considered the report on the conclusions and recommendations of the first Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts on El Niño, held at Guayaquil, Ecuador, from 9 to 13 November 1998,[11] and the feasibility study for the establishment of an international research centre on the El Niño/Southern Oscillation,[12]

Reaffirming the importance of developing strategies at the national, subregional, regional and international levels that aim to prevent, mitigate and rehabilitate the damages caused by natural disasters resulting from the El Niño phenomenon,

Taking into account the considerations in relation to the use of tele-observation systems on weather forecast and climate contained in the report of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, held in Vienna, from 19 to 30 July 1999,[13]

1. *Takes note with satisfaction* of the report of the Secretary-General,[9] and endorses the conclusions and recommendations contained therein;

2. *Welcomes* the 1999 retrospective report on the El Niño/Southern Oscillation prepared by the World Meteorological Organization;

3. *Reiterates* its invitation to Member States in paragraphs 8 and 9 of resolution 52/200 in relation to the technical and financial assistance needed to strengthen the national capacity of developing countries to support observation and research systems at the global and regional levels to prevent, mitigate and repair the damage caused by the El Niño/Southern Oscillation;

4. *Welcomes* the recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session regarding the approach that the United Nations system and the international community should take in dealing with the El Niño/Southern Oscillation,[14]

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[8] A/54/497.

[9] A/54/135-E/1999/88.

[10] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 9* (E/1999/29).

[11] See A/C.2/53/10.

[12] A/54/135-E/1999/88, annex II.

[13] A/CONF.184/6.

[14] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 9* (E/1999/29), para. 34.

and reiterates its invitation to Member States to cover the impact of the El Niño/Southern Oscillation in their annual national reports;

5. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General, the relevant United Nations organizations and the international community to take necessary measures, as appropriate, to establish an international research centre on El Niño at Guayaquil, Ecuador, invites the international community to provide financial, technical and scientific assistance and cooperation for this purpose, and encourages the centre, once established, to strengthen its links with other relevant regional and global climate-study organizations and to focus on the practical application of information regarding El Niño in such areas as disaster preparedness, agriculture, health, tourism, water and energy;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to promote the full implementation of its resolutions 52/200 and 53/185 as an integral part of the agreed arrangements after the conclusion of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction;

7. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, through the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eighth session and the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2000, a report on the implementation of the present resolution, under the agenda item entitled "Environment and sustainable development".